



# MDWFP Aerial Waterfowl Survey Report

January 7 - 9, 2014



**WATERFOWL PROGRAM**

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Due to the period of freezing weather, data collection during this survey was slightly reduced from normal levels. However, MDWFP biologists were able to complete the early January MDWFP aerial waterfowl survey during the week of January 6 – 10, with the exception of flying the southernmost counties along the Mississippi River (i.e. from Warren County south to Wilkinson County). Wetland habitat availability has increased somewhat since the December survey. As in December, managed water generally increased as survey transects moved further northeast.

Overall, early January duck estimates were significantly above average compared to the same surveys in previous years (Table 1 and Figure 1). All groups of ducks surveyed (e.g. mallards, other dabblers, and divers) followed the same trend, with estimates well above the past averages for this time of year. Mallards were the most abundant species observed followed by northern shovelers and gadwall.

The northern portion of the Delta contained the greatest abundance of ducks overall, as well as the greatest amount of managed wetland habitat on the landscape. The north Delta also contained the greatest abundance of mallards. However, distribution of these birds was greatly influenced by the availability of open water.

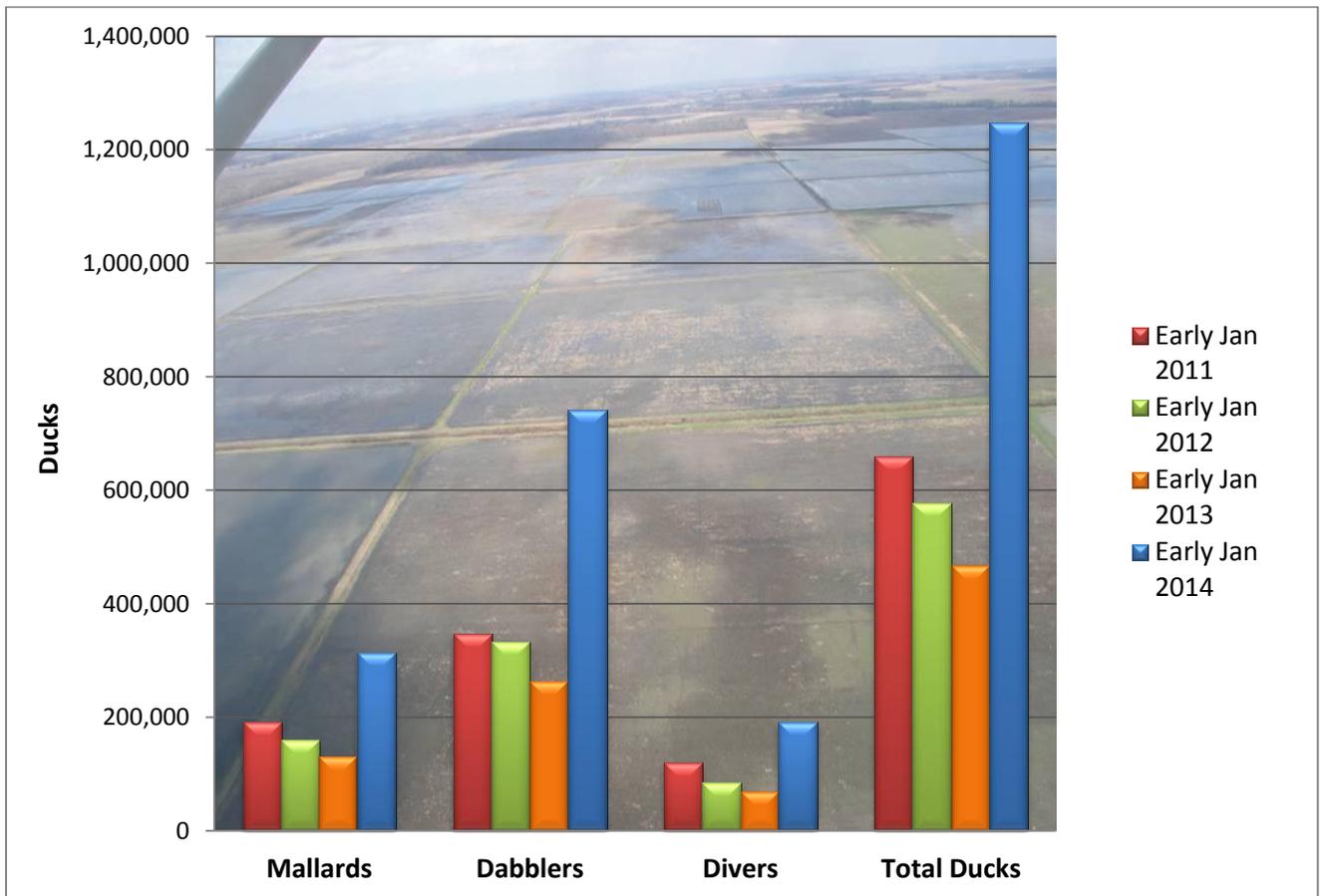
Waterfowl habitat use varied greatly over the course of the survey. The northern portion of the Delta was surveyed on January 7-8. During this time, the majority of shallow habitats were frozen, leaving only deep water habitats such as rivers and oxbows available for waterfowl to utilize. Most mallards and other dabblers were observed using oxbows and sloughs along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, as well as the rivers themselves. As shallow habitats began to thaw later in the survey, mallards and other dabblers began to once again use these areas. Following milder temperatures, most mallards and other dabblers were observed on moist-soil habitats followed by large complexes of flooded agriculture. Most diving ducks were observed using large permanent wetlands such as deep sloughs and catfish ponds. Most dabblers using permanent water were observed in thicker scrub-shrub wetlands. This time of year, mallards and other ducks seek out habitats with more cover to form and strengthen pair bonds with mates and to avoid hunting pressure.

The next aerial waterfowl survey is scheduled to begin the week of January 27, 2014. With record waterfowl abundances during the first two surveys, biologists are optimistic that Mississippi will continue to see similar waterfowl populations during late January. For more information on the MDWFP Waterfowl Program, visit our website at <http://mdwfp.com/waterfowl>.

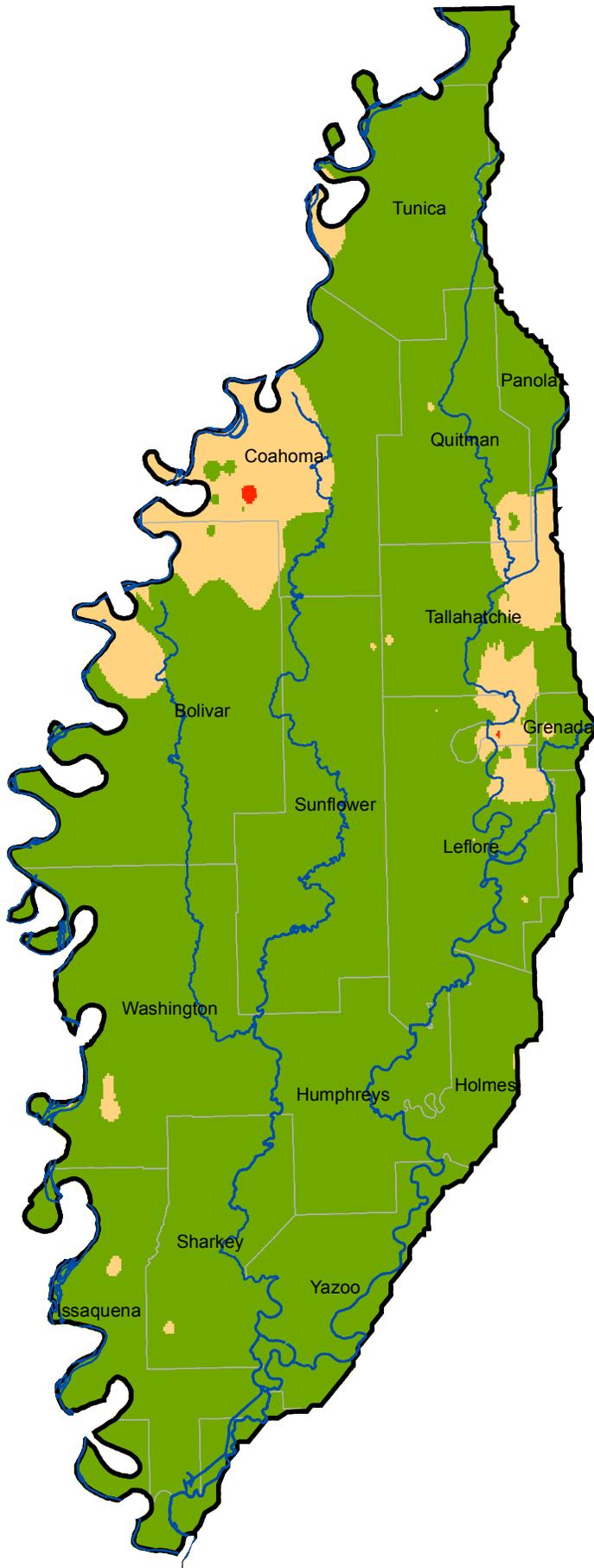
**Table 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2011-2014. Previous years' estimates are adjusted for accurate comparison to 2014.

Species	Survey Period			
	Early Jan 2011	Early Jan 2012	Early Jan 2013	Early Jan 2014
Mallards	191,799	159,512	131,930	313,851
Dabblers	346,647	333,430	263,852	742,182
Diving Ducks	120,532	83,880	70,775	191,888
<b>Total Ducks</b>	<b>658,978</b>	<b>576,822</b>	<b>466,557</b>	<b>1,247,921</b>

**Figure 1.** Waterfowl abundance estimates in the Mississippi Delta during the early January survey period, 2011-2014. Previous years' estimates are adjusted for accurate comparison to 2014.

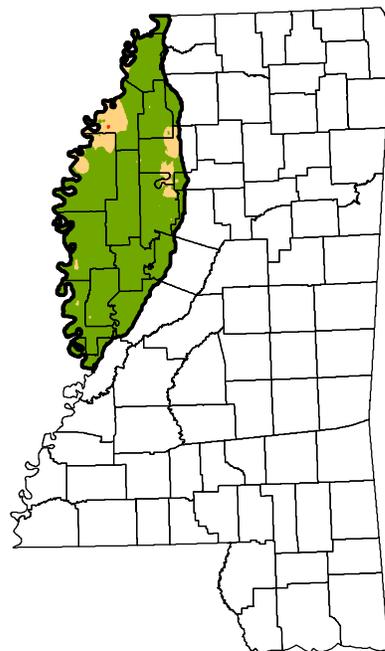


# Distribution of Mallards in the Mississippi Delta Jan.7 - 9, 2014

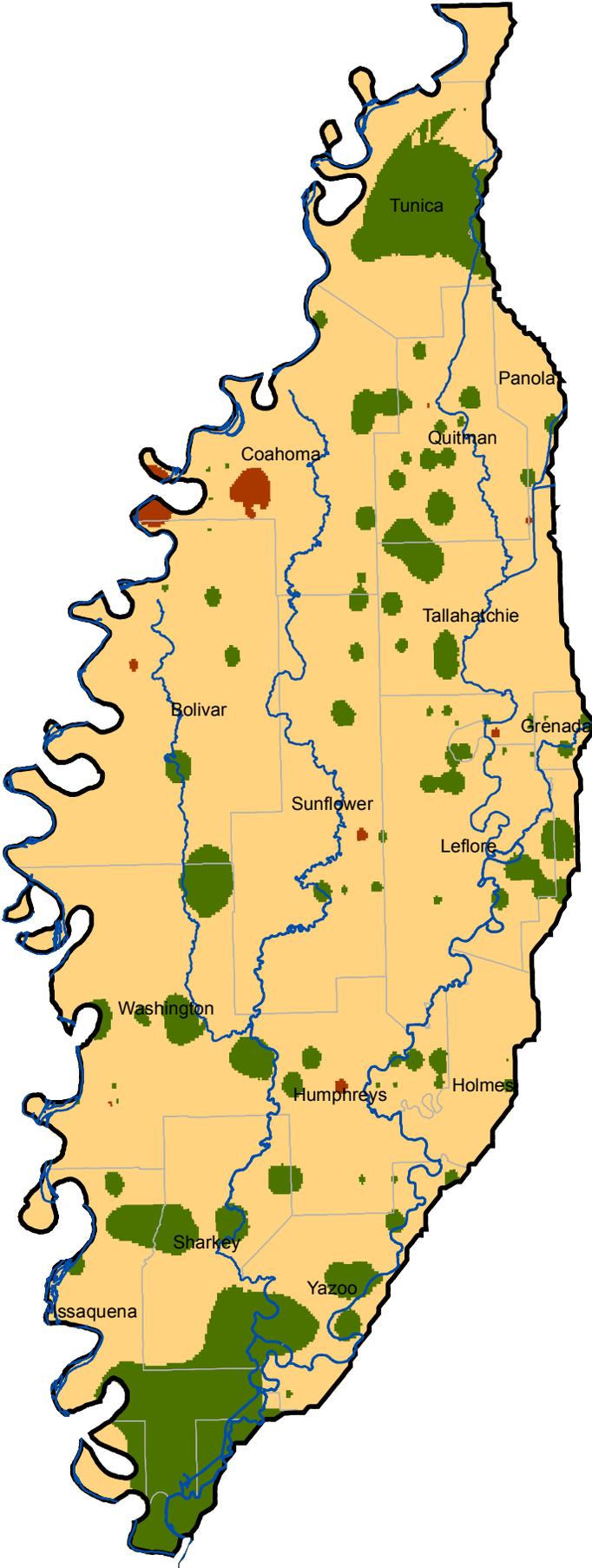


## Description

- Low (<12/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- Medium (12-115/mi<sup>2</sup>)
- High (>115/mi<sup>2</sup>)

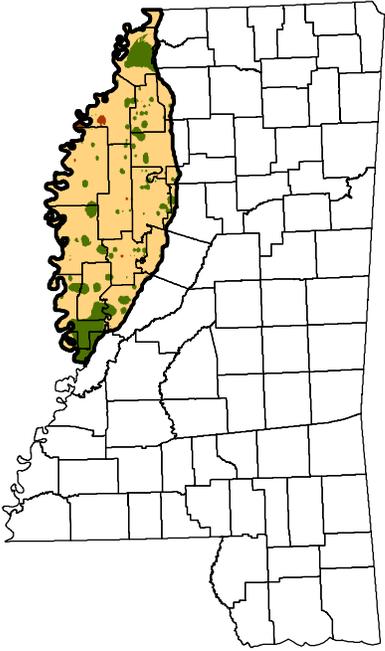


# Distribution of Total Ducks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 7- 9, 2014

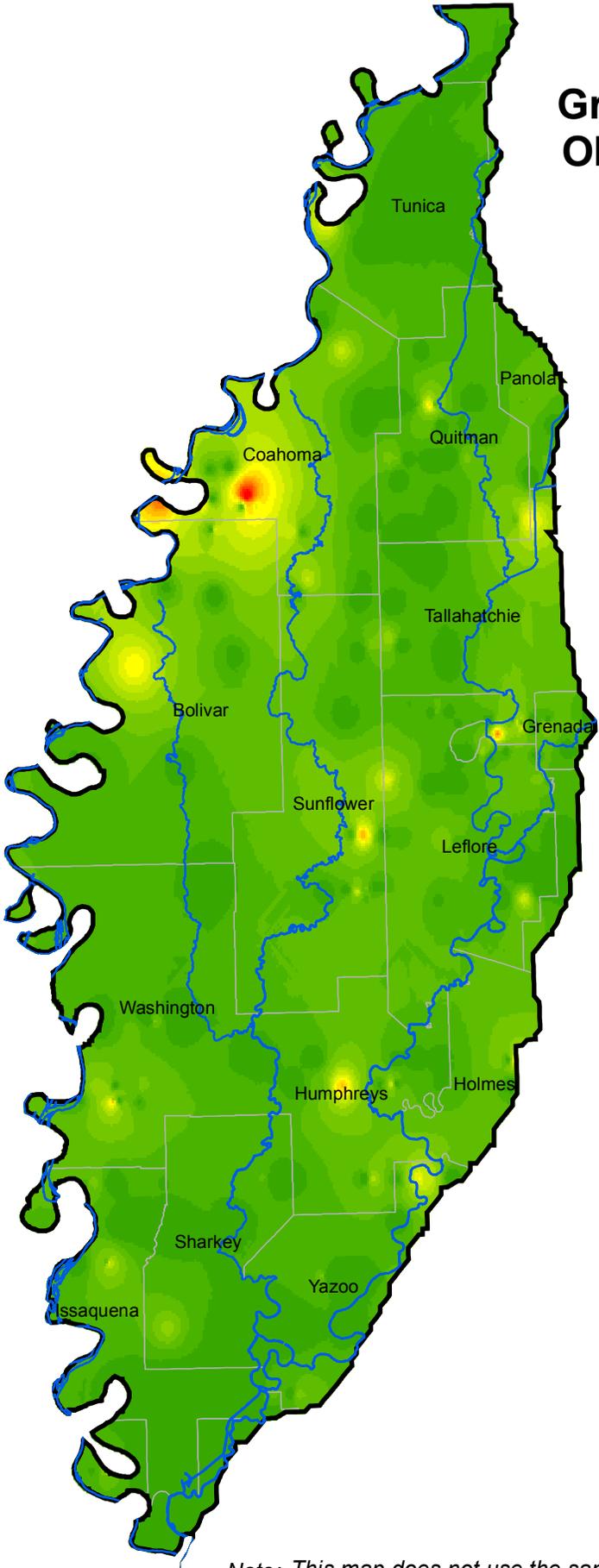


### Description

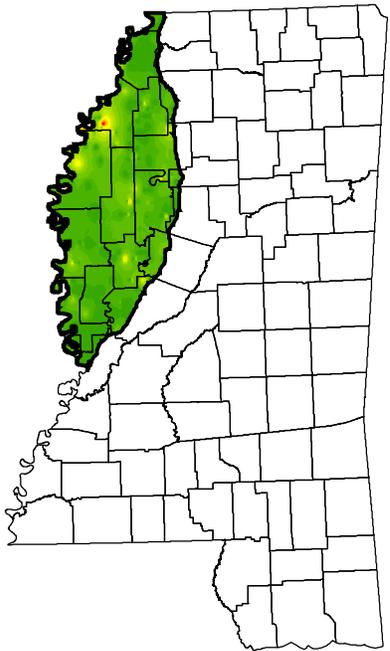
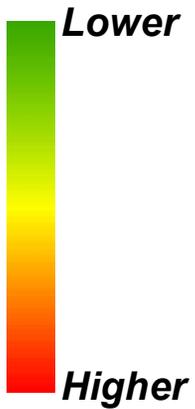
- Low (<12/mi2)
- Medium (12-115/mi2)
- High (>115/mi2)



# Greatest Concentrations of Ducks Observed in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 7 - 9 , 2014



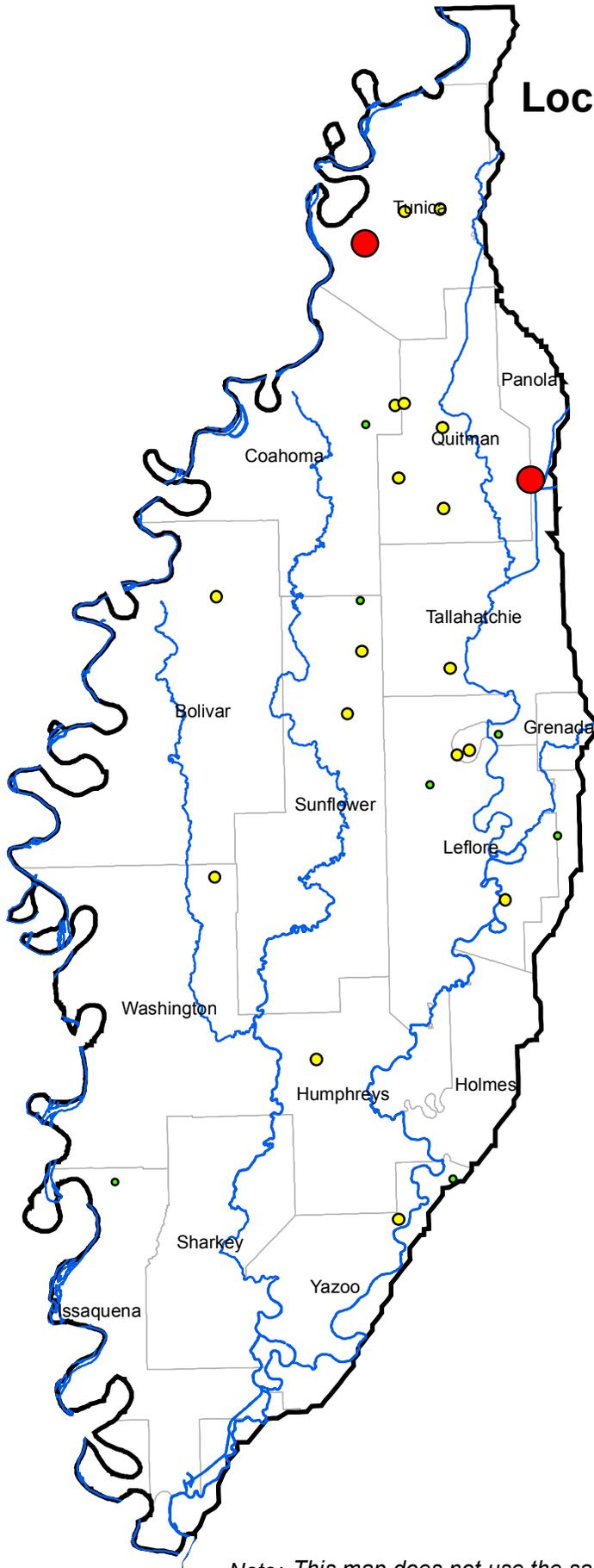
## Description



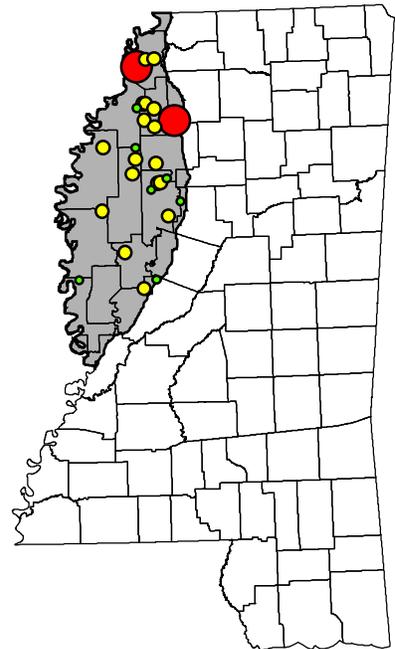
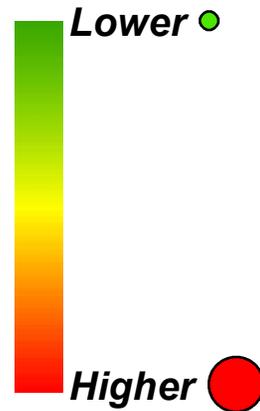
*Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate major concentrations of ducks in the Mississippi Delta.*



# Locations and relative size of light goose flocks in the Mississippi Delta Jan. 7 - 9, 2014



## Description



*Note: This map does not use the same area calculations as previously published maps and is intended to illustrate some locations of light geese in the Mississippi Delta.*

